THE PORT FOLIO,

(NEW SERIES)

BY OLIVER OLDSCHOOL, ESQ.

Various, that the mind of desultory man, studious of change and pleased with novelty, may be indulged—Cowp.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS.

For The Port Folio.

TRAVELS.

LETTERS FROM GENEVA AND FRANCE.

Written during a residence of between two and three years in different parts of those countries, and addressed to a lady in Virginia.

(*Continued from page* 218.)

LETTER XLVIII.

I SAW nothing of the Court of Milan.* The Empress was indisposed, or fatigued, and never came abroad. She is generally spoken well of for her mild and affable manners, for her beneficence, and for a good humoured and sensible recollection of former circumstances, while she does not seem, either by her conversation or appearance to be any way unfit for those of the present time. She was observed to smile once as a person was presented to her in Paris, and as he expressed his high sense of the honour conferred on him, in being allowed to fill some place of Chamberlain, or gentleman usher about her person; observing, after he had retired, that she remembered having made interest to be invited to a concert at that gentleman's house, and of having been rather uncivily repulsed. Her son, the Vice Roy of Italy is said to be a good natured, brave, and well informed young man, who does the best he can to procure in private such amusements, as may console him for the tiresome trappings of greatness which encumber him in publick: the fate of the family is a singular one, and if ever they fall from their present elevated station, I wish it may be with as little mortification as possible.

The emperour was absent; he was gone to receive the adorations, I can call them by no other name,

* We every day met a courier from Milan, and were past by one from Paris, so regularly was the communication kept up between the two places. This single article cost one hundred Louis d'or a day.

of his new subjects, and to determine what he should do with such powers as offered themselves to his government. If he reads Tacitus, he must often have in mind, the sentence which Tiberius was heard to quote, as he once quitted the Senate house. It is to be lamented that a genius so fitted by the arts of peace and war, for an elevated station, should have no Constitutional restraints opposed to his momentary opinions in the government of a great country. It is more than human nature can bear, and more than it should be exposed to: he is not likely either, to be opposed by the talents of any cotemporary Prince. That portion of the Bourbons which has been able to keep possession of the throne of Naples and of Spain, is not very advantageously spoken of; no genius springs up in Germany, and the King of Sweden excites no other notice than now and then a sarcastick paragraph in the Moniteur. Russia is too far off, and England is powerful only by sea.

But it is time to return to our travels and to inform you that we quitted Milan on the evening of the fourth day after our arrival and took the road to Sesto, which you will find on any map of Lombardy: it is situated at the spot where the Tesino, after having principally contributed to from the Lac Maggiore, reassumes its course again towards the sea, as the Rhone does at Geneva. I was surprised to find a tract of uncultivated country near Gallerate which the government was willing to make grants of, I was told, to any one who presented himself. It was the first time I had seen in Europe what we, in America, call vacant land, and to complete my astonishment the soil was good, and the climate delightful, but there was no command of water for irrigation; it had been formerly cultivated, but was abandoned, owing it is said, to a burdensome imposition of taxes, and was likely to remain for years in its present situation. La Lande, who travelled thirty years ago in the Milanese says, that land had sold as high as 2263 livres the arpent or acre, but that the price varied in general according to the quality and convenience for irrigation from 158 livres to 57. Rice land could then be hired at 15 livres the arpent or acre, and the average profit arising from agriculture was 3 1-2 per cent. on the capital: it was not in my power to learn if any difference had taken place since, but I believe it to be inconsiderable if any. Sesto is a small place, which had nothing to detain us, and we embarked in a boat navigated by four stout men, all of whom rowed standing erect with their faces to the prow, and two had an oar in either hand. We went with great velocity, and had soon got out of the current, which is perceivable at the extremity of the Lake, to where it was spread out in a smooth expanse and diversified here and there by a sail and by the towns and villages which crown its banks. Two of these little towns in particular attracted our attention, these were Angera and Arona in face of each other. They reminded me of Dover and Calais, and the resemblance, though in miniature, must have been striking, when two different and frequently hostile powers possessed the opposite shores. The steep hill sides were chiefly in vineyards, and the houses which were scattered over their surface appeared more like places of retreat in the summer to

the opulent gentry of Milan, than dwelling places of farmers. We landed at Arona and found a small and rather a gloomy town with a harbour in which a merchant ship might barely turn round, but which is sufficiently spacious for the barks which navigate the Lake. Merchandise of considerable value passes here in the intercourse between Germany and Italy in time of peace, but the war has been fatal to trade in every part of the continent. The inhabitants value themselves on the antiquity of their city and are persuaded, it seems, that the Aronaim alluded to by the Prophet Isaiah, see chap. 15, verse — is no other but their identical city of Arona, and I believe really it would be difficult to prove the contrary. The boatmen, who seemed afraid of our thinking too well of Arona, told us, that there was a continued and miraculous interference of heaven near Angera, which was also worth our attention; an immense rock seems suspended almost on the brink of a declivity which overhangs the convent, and is kept from yielding to the natural tendency of all heavy bodies by the intercession and influence of a female Saint, whose name I forget. —I think if the Pope, who is at the head of this enormous system of absurdity, which has so unaccountably sprung up from the principles of truth and piety, were wise, he would act as an able general with a small garrison has frequently been known to do: he would abandon fortifications which are too extensive for his means of defence, and would retire into the citadel.

We found a number of labourers working with great spirit upon the new road near Arona, and ascended a neighbouring hill in order to see the Statue of St. Charles Borromeo. This gigantick statue is sixty-six feet in height upon a pedestal of forty-six feet, and was erected in the year 1697, at the joint expense of the neighbouring country and of the Borromean family. The head and arms are of bronze cast, and the remainder of beaten copper. The Saint is placed with great propriety in front of a college, which owes its foundation to his liberality, and love of learning: and his right hand stretched forth, in the act of blessing the waters of the lake, must be a comfortable sight to these fair weather sailors, when they are catched out a few miles from shore, by a gale of wind: the lake to them is an ocean, they measure the breadth of it with an eye of terrour, and their fears convert every squall into a tempest: I have already brought you acquainted with Saint Charles, who so well deserved canonization if ever man did, and in whose enormous features there is an air of paternal benignity. There were some workmen repairing the corner of the pedestal, who showed us a skirt of his garment, under which a person must insinuate himself, who is desirous of mounting up into the Saint's head. They told us with a degree of ludicrous precision of the proportions of this monstrous head, how many men might sit in it around a table, how much at ease F.——— and I might be in the two nostrils, and that a person standing upon one of the eye brows could barely reach the top of the Saint's cap. We were satisfied however with an external view, and embarked again at the foot of the hill, and a breeze springing up, we spread our sail, and leaving the length of the lake to the extent of about fifty miles upon our right stood for the

gulf at the western extremity, in which are situated the Borromean Islands. There are four in number: one of them is unimproved; another called Isola Pescatoria is covered by a little fishing town, and two, known by the name of Isola Madre, and Isola Bella, have for many years attracted the admiration of travellers.

It was the pride and pleasure of a Count Borromeo, who lived towards the end of the sixteenth century, to convert two naked rocky Islands of a few acres, into what the imagination of every beholder has been embarrassed to find terms capable of expressing his admiration of. We landed first at Isola Bella, and having viewed the palace, proceeded through groves of evergreens, many of which I perceived to be of American origin, to the other extremity of the Island; this is covered by a construction of masonry on vaults, which support a succession of terraces receding as they rise one above the other to the aggregate height of upwards of one hundred feet, where the whole is crowned by a platform and surrounded by a balustrade and adorned with statues: the annexed drawing will give you an idea of what I mean to describe, and your imagination may supply the walls of the various terraces, which are ten in number, with all the beautiful varieties of the orange tribe in Espaliers; of these, some were in full bearing and others in blossom, and the whole as I looked down upon it, from the platform, had more the appearance of Fairy land, than any thing I ever beheld. At a little distance on one side we saw the Isola Madre, where there are also terraces, with lemons and oranges, shady groves and a lawn that leads down to the brink of the water from a handsome house, and the Isola Pescatoria on the other. The little town that covers this last, is said to contain five hundred souls; the men gain their living by fishing, and the women employ themselves in making and mending nets: the possession of an acre or two on the main land crowns the hopes of a long life among these simple and industrious people. There are several towns also spread along the banks of the lake, and the view after having been gratified with the wonders of art and nature united in so small a compass, after having reposed upon the clear unruffled expanse of a beautiful sheet of water in every direction, loses itself in the dark valleys and amid the snowy eminences of the neighbouring Alps.

The palace of the Count might serve for the residence of a royal family; gilding and marble, the costliest furniture and the finest mirrors are to be admired in every room, and there are several pictures done by eminent masters: the lower suite of rooms is in a style particularly adapted to a hot climate, the walls, the pillars that support the ceiling, and the ceiling itself, as well as the floor, are of the variously coloured pebbles of the lake, which are wedged closely to each other without cement, and with a great deal of taste. The fancy of a poet could not devise a residence more suited to the genius of the place. The Count, who is lord paramount of the whole lake, very seldom resides here, and makes the most liberal use of his extensive rights, and his vassals, who are perhaps five hundred in number, are ready at a word to man his Gondolas, or to render any service he requires of them; they are sure to wait upon him also, with the best of what

they get, either in the lake or at the chase. The generality of travellers who visit these fortunate Islands, prefer the happy imitation of nature in the Isola Madre to all the splendour of the Isola Bella. They are amused also with the number of pheasants that are reared there, and who live at large, except that food is provided for them: five men were every day employed, the gardener told me, in collecting ant hills upon the main; these are thrown together into a large box where the poor ants make out as well as they can in a state of horrible confusion until they are given out to the young pheasants, who devour thousands at a meal, both of the animal itself and of what is improperly called their eggs: we took a last look at these Islands with a degree of regret.

I can well conceive that the means of a wealthy nobleman might in these days of taste and refinement, be made to produce a far more pleasing appearance of ornamented nature, and that the various fruits of the West Indies might have formed an agreeable variety in this wilderness of oranges and lemons; but the terraces of Isola Bella are a noble creation, the vicinity of savage mountains renders the exhibition of so much art the more admirable; and when it is remembered that the purse of the Borromei has been open to every demand of science, charity or religion, that hospitals and schools have been built and endowed by the successive chiefs of the family, they seem, in the thousands which have been lavished here with so much magnificence to have made but a liberal use of their superfluous wealth. The ardent imagination of Rousseau had once led him, it is said, to think of fixing the scene of his Nouvelle Heloisa amid these Islands: but they were upon too small a scale, and except in the family of the Count himself, with whom an authour could hardly have taken so great a liberty, it would have been impossible to have found models for his heroine, and for the society she lived in: those of the inhabitants of Isola Bella, whom I saw, and who were not in the service of the Count, appeared a poor and dirty race of mortals; I should rather take them, if I were disposed to be poetick, for the sad objects on which some treacherous divinity, the mistress of this fair island, had exercised her wrath, as Calypso did upon the companions of Ulysses.

We now proceeded to the extremity of the lake, and entering a canal which has been dug within these few years, soon found ourselves in the lake of Margozzo, which is of very inferiour dimensions to the one we had quitted; the little town that gives name to the lake presented itself at the upper end, before us, and with the number of fishing boats which were drawn up on the strand, it had to our imagination the appearance of a sea port in miniature: on the back ground were the lofty mountains, among which we knew that our road was to wind, and we endeavoured to prepare ourselves for the fatigues of the next day by enjoying the comforts of a tolerable inn.

LETTER XLIX.

It is impossible either to travel with advantage or to read the naration of travellers to any useful purpose, unless one is furnished with good maps; I request of you therefore to lay the map of upper Italy upon the table before you, and to place yourself in imagina-

tion at Margozzo; the road which is now carried on by the orders of Bonaparte, as Emperour and King passes from Arona along the lake, leaves Margozzo upon the right, and follows the course of the Tosa, making almost a right angle at Vogogna, and another near Masera by Trasquera and Gondo to the Vallaison village of Simpelberg. I admire, and believe I have expressed it before, the sublime simplicity of being guided by nature as far as it is compatible with art; a beautiful terrace, (I can call it by no other name) now reigns along the Tosa, preserving nearly the same distance from the level of the water the whole way. The degree of fall, which converts a stream into a roaring torrent, is but a gentle descent to the traveller, and he moves along with safety and with comfort, where a boat would be dashed to pieces in a moment. It seems to be the difference between the maturity of reason, and the headlong passions of the mind, which often hurry man to destruction. The bridges upon this road are handsome; subterranean passages carry off the waters that might injure it, and where the declivity is perpendicular, a tunnel is cut, through which the road passes. The whole of the way for nearly forty or perhaps fifty English miles has been chiefly effected by mining.* It will be interesting in a few years to observe the effects that a great facility of communication, and the passage of strangers and all the circumstances of trade, will have had upon the manners and morals of the people of the neighbouring Alps. The accounts given by Mr. de Saussure will in time require perhaps all the weight which they will ever derive from his name to render them credible.

Placing yourself at Margozzo, a line due north carries you in twenty or twenty-five miles to the passage of Mr. de Saussure on his way from the sources of the Rhone in the Vallais into the Val Maggia or Rheintal, the inhabitants of which, by the strangest of all political absurdities, were the subjects of the democratick cantons of Switzerland. They had been given to them by Francis the first in payment of arrears which he could not otherwise discharge during one of his moments of temporary success in the Milanese: the governour appointed by Schwitz and Underwalden was generally a peasant, who longed for some opportunity of exercising his power even at the expense of his subjects; and he was attended by a servant allowed him by the state, who was not unfrequently his brother or some other near relation, with whom it was very possible that in a year or two he might change conditions, and whose fortune he had to take care of. Mr. de Saussure passed from Bosco, where for three months in the winter the sun is never seen, to Cerentino, where the inhabitants have the sun for three hours while their neighbours are in darkness, and to Cevio which you will find by following the stream that runs down the Val Maggia towards the lake, leaving Locarno a little on the left:

* I have since been informed by the principal engineer that the rise and the fall on the whole of the road is upon an average four and a half inches in six feet: the bridges are from seventy to ninety feet above the surface of the torrents they cross: the estimate, now founded upon experience, of the expense of the whole undertaking for the lake of Geneva to near Sesto, a distance of about one hundred and thirty miles is ten millions of livres; the undertakers it is thought will clear about one hundred thousand.

as this was the residence of the governour or bailiff, says Mr. de Saussure, "I was not afraid of exciting any troublesome curiosity by the experiments I might make, and was observing the elevation of the village by the barometer, near the bailiff's residence, when he approached and invited me in; I could not well refuse, and was in hopes that I might learn something of what was going on in the world below, with which I had kept up but a very imperfect communication for sometime past: on my asking him if he had seen any late papers, he answered in the negative, but assured me, that he could answer to any question I might choose to make by a mode peculiar to himself: so saying he drew out a seal of black crystal, and explained the oracular use of it to me with the air of a man, who spoke from a thorough conviction, that what he uttered was strictly true: his mode was to suspend the seal by a thread in a tumbler of water, and as a tremulous motion of the hand invariably communicated a degree of vibration to the seal he received an answer by the number of times it struck against the sides of the tumbler, to any question that passed through his mind; he had never been mistaken he said in his desire to know the secrets of his own household or the particulars of an election in his native Canton: he showed me what the Almanack says of the age of the world, and agreed with me when I told him my observations had led me to suppose the term rather too short, for I tried the question with my seal the other day, said he, and it makes the world full four years older than the ignorant people pretend: my agreement of opinion with him opened the good man's heart, and he presented me with half a loaf of household bread, which was a present not to be thought slightly of; I had seen no bread for some time past, which had not been baked six months at least, and was to be cut with a hatchet."

The landlord at Margozzo had been invested by the government with a right to make travellers show their passports and give an account of themselves; he thought my name the strangest he had ever met with and as unutterable, as we do some in Gulliver's travels; and yet one might have supposed that his near neighbourhood to the Vallais, would have familiarised him to the names of mountains, places and persons, unrivalled even by those of the Houyhnhnms. You would be struck with the superiority of the Italian language, in point of sound, over the German, at the mere inspection of a traveller's itinerary. We had come, for instance, from Sesto to Margozzo, and were to pass by Domo de Ossola and Grondo to Sempione, and were then to descend into the Wallais through Brig, Wisp, and Turtig, and Tortiman and Sider.

Wilkes pretended that any man would presume John Dryden to be a better poet than Elkanah Settle, if he judged by their names only, and you I am certain, would look for better accomodations at Castellanza or Arona, then at Bister or Gliss: it is possible however that you might be mistaken. The conscience of our landlord at Margozzo, was not so delicate as his ear, and he made us pay enormously for two horses and a guide, with a little mule to carry our baggage.

After a few miles along an obscure path, we joined the new road upon the side of the Tosa, and

proceeded West as far as Anzasca: we then turned due North and were before one o'clock at Duoma d'Ossola; a continuation of our first direction would have carried us to Macaguaga, which I mentioned to you in a former letter: the towns and villages we passed on the road, were of a better appearance than I had expected, and the sides of the mountains though steep were cultivated with the utmost care, wherever the soil would admit of it: the favourite culture appeared to be the vine, and there were numbers of walnut trees, which here as well as in Savoye and Italy, are much prized for the oil which the nuts afford; it supplies the place of olive oil, is more agreeable to the taste but less digestible. Duoma d'Ossola is a small but very ancient town, with walls and a Castle in ruins; in former times, which we too often speak of as better than the present, the inhabitants were exposed to the incursions of the Vallaizans, and a great many dismal accounts are to be found in history of the injuries which these ignorant and ferocious people mutually inflicted: a century or two, however, of tranquillity has ensued under the government of the emperour of Germany, and then of the King of Sardinia, in whose portion of the Milanese this district was included: it is now annexed to the Italian monarchy.

The road which passes these ancient and obscure places, is by no means an agreeable circumstance to the generality of the inhabitants; it exposes their antique manners to the observation of mankind, and has already introduced the luxury of eating meat and of baking their bread more than once a year. They begin to feel too, how troublesome it is to have soldiers billeted upon them, and regret the good old time when there was no restraint to smuggling: their complaints on this subject, put me in mind of those of the landlord in the first chapter of Peregrine Pickle: it would formerly have been rash indeed in any custom-house officer to have stopped these mountaineers, in making their way through a country, where the passage in many places, was literally speaking, but a long shelf suspended over a frightful precipice, and without any sort of railing: as we frequently found the new road unfinished, or rendered dangerous by the blowing up of rocks, we necessarily followed the old one, and scarcely ever, I answer for myself at least, without sentiments of inward dread: your ——— whose apprehensions were not as great as mine, took a pleasure oftener than I could have wished, in gazing upon the abyss below, and in precipitating the fragments of rocks which lay near the edge.

The opinion of those, who are best acquainted with exploring a road amid precipices and those horrid chasms to be met with on the frozen vallies of the Glaciers, is, that the traveller should begin by examining minutely with the eye, the nature of what he is to encounter, before he exposes himself to it; he must know the worst before hand they say, and make up his mind accordingly; should the agitation of doubt or ignorance come across him in a moment of danger, he is lost, unless some guide is at hand to save him: it is a question among moralists how far the same principle is applicable to the government of human life: and whether young persons should be made acquainted with the nature, as well as consequences of

those allurements we would have them resist as leading to dangers we would have them avoid: Rousseau's opinion is in the affirmative, and in a qualified sense, he may be right, but there is a great deal of purity in ignorance.

The road turned to the West shortly after we left Duomo d'Ossola, and we now found ourselves in a narrow valley, the naked sides of which bid defiance to every species of industry; it seemed as if a mass of rock had been cleft by some superiour power: we stopt a moment at Gondo, which consists but of two or three houses, and is in the wildest part of the valley; the only way into the room of the inn was through the stable, and when we got up stairs, the figures whom we saw playing at cards around a table, were such as the imagination might easily have converted into robbers and assassins. They were miners, who had been at work all the day upon the road, and were as black as smoke and gun powder could make them. I saw here not the smallest appearance of cultivation, the mountains were bleak and barren, and that, which arose immediately behind the house, exhibited a precipice of at least three thousand feet.

We were now to take our leave of the beautiful Italian language. Gondo is on the confines of the Milanese: we soon began to hear German spoken, and at Sempione or Simpelendorff which is in the Vallaisan territory, it was difficult to find a person who spoke any other language. I am sure it took us at least five minutes to make the servant of the house comprehend that we wanted a light: this difference of language taking place so abruptly has always excited my astonishment: a line might be traced through Switzerland between the French and German languages: it would sometimes lead between the opposite banks of a river, or the extremities of a bridge, and in one instance through the midst of a town: the variety in the modes of dress of the women is still greater, and though not as important, to the full as unaccountable. Those of Margozzo and in the Milanese in general, had their hair rolled up, and confined on the back of the head with a double headed skewer, with smaller skewers or bodkins passing through the centre to a rim, which gave the whole the appearance of a small wheel; but at a little distance to the west of Tosa, we found the women in their shift sleeves and their hair in a wreath on the top of their head with little knots of ribbon pendant, and shortly after they had the appearance of Creoles with their heads tied up in coloured handkerchiefs. At Simpelendorff, their heads were again uncovered, and the hair confined with an ornament not unlike the Milanese fashion. Both sexes in these upper regions were in general likely and active, without the smallest appearance of goitres, and without there being any of those disgusting objects, whom you will see described in books of travels under the name of Cretins. That disagreeable swelling of the throat, which when excessive, is frequently attended by the loss of reason, is attributed not to the water, of which the inhabitants of the upper and the lower regions drink the same, but to the confined air of the Vallais. Simpelendorff is about four thousand feet above the lake of Geneva, it is a small village surrounded by fine pastures and between lofty eminences, where the snow resists the

heat of the longest and hottest summer: there were some remains of avalanches on several parts of the road as we came along, and the probability is these falling masses will render it unsafe during, by far, the greater part of the year. The Vallaisans say, and brobably with a degree of satisfaction, that it will not be possible to travel this way during more than three months out of the twelve.

We discharged our horses at Simpelendorff, and proceeded the next morning on foot to cross the mountain, which the French call the Simplon. Its utmost elevation, on the road I mean, is about one thousand feet above the village; the view is rather savage than sublime. The mountain sides are of bare rocks and the extremities of several small glaciers are seen connected with their snowy extremities; one would suppose that such a place would have been safe from the ravages of war, but the French found their way here in eighteen hundred and one, ill used such of the inhabitants as they surprised, and carried off from the village of Simpelendorff all that was worth taking: you may conceive what a name they left behind them.

A pedestrian excursion performed across the Pyrennees, from Bagneres de Luchon in south France, to Venasque, in Spain†, by J. W. Horneman, lecturer of botany at Copenhagen. Translated from a Danish periodical publication, entitled 'For Sandbed.'

Among the Pyrennean bathing places, Bagneres de Luchon is the next in rank to Bagneres de Bigorre, not for the medical virtues of the springs, but for the number of amusements. Built upon a fertile plain, where two valleys and two rivers meet, surrounded by pretty high mountains, and concealed under two promontories, it has indeed, a very interesting situation; but still it does not boast that luxuriant fertility, nor that lively colour of youth, by which nature is distinguished around the Bigorrean Bagneres. For five days the roughness of the weather obliged us to perform quarantine; and it was not before the 27th of July that we could begin our pedestrian journey across the frontiers into Spain. It was a most beautiful morning, when, each of us armed with an ice-stick,* and having a hunter of Chamois for our guide, we walked off from the noisy amusements of the bathing company, towards the silent grandeur of nature. On the right and the left we had two lofty, dark, woody chains of mountains, which were not yet reached by the rays of the sun; and in the back-ground were seen the towering, snow-clad mountains of Port de Vanasque. The contrast between the dark pines of the former and the glittering snow of the latter; between the gloom of night on the nearer, and the fulness of day and light on the more distant heights, was extremely striking; and it appeared to us as if we were travelling through darkness and terrour towards the temple of truth and light. Continually ascending against the falling *Pique*,† we passed the old fortress *Castelvieil* just when the sun enclosed the summits of the mountains in a golden frame; and, after an ascent of six hours, we reached a shepherd's cottage, which formerly was a kind of inn,‡ but now, destroyed by a strag-

† This journey was probably accomplished in the year 1799, or about that time.

* This stick is indispensable on alpick journies. It is about six feet long, and is used not only for support in ascending, but also for stopping the rapidity of the descent; for jumping over clefts, and for directing the course in sliding down upon the snow.

† The name of the mountain river.

‡ Such places are to be met with almost at every passage between the two kingdoms. The place where there is a pass, is called *port*, and the inn, *hospice*.

gling party of Spaniards, hardly afforded to its summer-inhabitants protection from wet and cold. One hour's rest, good bread, and the crystal liquid of the spring, made us forget the fatigue we had endured, and strengthened us for that which we had yet to encounter. We were already on that height which is inhabitable only in the summer; vegetation gradually disappeared, and the cold increased. The valley divided into two smaller ones, and the acclivity of the ground, which had hitherto allowed us to proceed in a straight line, or at least to follow the course of the river, now compelled us to go forwards and backwards in oblique directions.

It was a scene dreadfully grand by which we were surrounded. I have indeed, after this, seen rocks of the same form, but never of the same colour. They were composed of a black lime-stone, which the lately discontinued rains had made still deeper. From the top of these rocks the melted snow descended in numberless stripes, which, illuminated by the rays of the sun, received the purest silver-lustre; this would be but faintly represented by silver upon black velvet! We proceeded, for one hour, between falling lumps of snow and fragments of stone, and narrow straps of ground; which those beautiful little plants, the *viola biflora* and the *soldanella alpina*, could not cover; here continually expecting to find an outlet from this prison, till at length we stood at the foot of a very steep side of the rock, which seemed still tighter to enclose us, and which, to our astonishment, our guide declared that we must ascend. He led the way. Walking closely in his steps, we followed, half-supported on our sticks, always in oblique directions, and at every step in fear of the deceitfulness of the snow. We had not long proceeded in this manner, when we came to the place where the river had its fall. Here the snow formed a bridge, the arch of which had given way in several places; producing to our eyes a depth, and to our ears a thundering roar, which could not have been delightful to those who have less feeling for the grandeur of such scenes, and consequently more fear of danger. We got over in safety, and went on. Now, however, a worse circumstance occurred. We were enveloped in a cloud, which concealed, indeed, every object that might raise apprehension, but also every mark that could serve for our direction; so that, if our guide had been less intimately acquainted with these dreary regions, and, also, if three deserters, who, the day before, fled from the conscription, had not left us their steps, we should hardly have been able to trace our way through these Thermopylæ. In this now and then half-transparent mist; sometimes under dreadful precipices; sometimes over bursting cataracts, which often we could only hear; then on steeply-inclined layers of snow, where, but a year ago, seven persons had been buried under a mass of snow rolling down from the upper heights; then again on slippery sides of the rocks; we walked on for several hours, thinly dressed, without mountain-spurs, and supported only by our faithful staffs, till at length we reached the highest part of the passage—the frontier between both countries.

Here the track disappeared, and our guide declared that he could no longer find his way! His meteorological experience, however, predicted that the mist would not long continue so thick; we therefore sat down among some projecting stones, between which the *Ranunculus Alpestris*, with some species of moss, were the only things seen of the vegetable kingdom, waiting for the completion of his prophecy, which soon took place. Suddenly the mists dispersed; and, as if by the creating fiat, a world came forth out of their chaos, but a world without finished form, without vegetation, without organization. Before us lay the dreadful Maladetta (the imperviousness

and barrenness of which has given rise to its name) with its prodigious masses of snow, and its glittering ice. Above us, vaulted cliffs were suspended; and, in a depth which the eye could hardly fathom, we descried something green, that betrayed plants, and a cottage that discovered men. This scene produced in me no exclamations, but a silent admiration, which made me forget all the fatigue I had endured, and which rivetted me to these sterile rocks like a pilgrim to the holy sepulchre. The most serene sky, and the most smiling weather, could not have procured us a spectacle like this! Here we saw the conflict of the tempest and the rocks, the rolling, the collision, the rising and the falling of the clouds; we saw the curtain drawn up before a world till now unknown to us; we saw light and shade distributed in new and singular forms; we saw the whole through a half-transparent mystical veil, which imagination could better penetrate than the eye;—we saw, at last, the curtain drop, and all disappear. Our guide had, in the meantime, made his observations, and marked out the course we were to pursue; and his feelings being less irritable than ours, and more habituated to scenes of this nature, he admonished us to pursue our journey, if we would not be benighted among the mountains. We were again enveloped in clouds, which did not leave us till about seven hundred yards lower down, we began to approach the inhabited world! Having descended this depth once more, we found ourselves in the *hospice*. We were now in Spain; but what a sudden alteration of abode! Hardly will it be believed, that fertility and sterility, urbanity and clownishness, openness and reservedness, wit and dulness, cleanliness and filth, could border so near upon each other as—France and Spain!! The mountains, especially that of the Pennablanca, wore a death-like colour; the sprouting plants which had been half-stifled by cold and wind, were killed by those rays that lately rescued them from the tyranny of winter; all verdure, in the vallies here, was less green than in the vallies we had left; living creatures were fewer; men were silent, and we were not welcomed even with a smile.

Four decayed walls, with a fireplace in the middle, which made the smoke circulate before it found an outlet through the roof, was all that could be afforded for our accommodation; indifferent bread and goat's milk were the only provisions; and rough stone benches were the only beds which the inhabitants could spare for their guests. To make the adventure still more romantick, our guide began to question the *safety* of the place: He asked the woman (for he thought with Rousseau and Ledyard, that *the fair sex is the last to lose the feelings of humanity*,) if she could assure us, by the Holy Virgin, and her conscience, that they would not murder us? It was in the dusk, and we had still twelve miles to walk, through desert rocks, to Venasque, the first city in Spain. On this road it was still more doubtful, whether we should escape danger. We therefore resolved to stay, and arranged our plans; relying more on some smugglers who were now expected, than on the Holy Virgin, whom the woman had invoked as a testification of our safety. In the meantime the company increased; and in less than an hour it consisted of deserters, hunters, smugglers, ass-drivers, shepherds, and botanists. We kindled a fire of *Rhododendron alpinum*, the only fuel known here; and then every one took forth out of his store what was requisite for the sustenance of life, and without which heroes and deserters, smugglers and botanists are nothing. One took a piece of dry bread, another took a piece of raw meat which he more singed than roasted, over the fire; the third took an egg, the fourth took a live frog, which he broiled, and then devoured it with the avidity of a stork! During all this, the Spaniards spoke not a

word; and the woman let her infant suck a goat, which, accustomed to this manner of milking, willingly offered the udder to the babe. As the provisions, so was the conversation; a strange mixture of Patoir, French, Spanish, and Danish. Night at length came on, and every one had to look out for a sleeping-place.—Happy he who had a jacket to rest his head upon! I slept very little, for filth and cold, and a stone couch agree but ill with one who is accustomed to French luxury. Among the guests assembled in the cottage was a hermit, from Eremitage d'Artrique Telline: he intended, the next day, to attend a solemnity at Venasque; and as we were rather exhausted by the fatigue of the day past, we agreed with him to make use, by turns, of his mule. At three o'clock the caravan was set in motion. The country through which we travelled was singular. If on the top of Pennablanca it was a forthcoming world, it was here a world passing away. Huge remnants of mountains, mouldering fragments of rock, withering trees, dilapidated cottages, precipitating and destroying cataracts, these were the objects with which we met. It appeared as if the covenant of life with organised nature had expired. Men were fled; seldom was there seen even a hovering *lorous fysphocorax*;* and every where death sat enthroned on the ruins of life! At seven o'clock we were in Venasque, a rich, yet miserably-built city; with a fortress that is defended by seven soldiers and a governour; but which, according to Ramon, was once the capital of a king, who, when angry, could raise five hundred men. Before we reached the city we passed several batteries, some of which were constructed in places that seemed almost impregnable; and if the Spaniards acquired no glory by defending them, yet they deserved our admiration in the construction of them. The city was crowded with people, who were assembled to celebrate a solemnity to the honour of St. Martial, formerly Bishop of Limoge, and now the guardian patron of this place. There being here no publick inn, we had recourse to a merchant, who had been recommended to us from Bagneres. Seeing, from our letters of introduction, that we were honest people from Denmark, he admitted us to lodge in his house; but he seemed afterwards to regret this accommodation, when he and his ladies discovered that we did not believe in Maria Sanctissima. We were, however, invited to attend the solemnity, which began with a procession the most ridiculous that can be imagined. First came a great troop of men dressed in dark, all covered with those black nets commonly used in Spain; then followed a great number of young boys, continually whiffling on small pipes, like those which are given to children for fair-presents; now were seen four stout fellows, with a saint on a hand-barrow; next came a choir of some tall ill-looking persons, who were called students, and who constitute a kind of seminary for clergymen; these were followed by the chief saint himself, on a throne, surrounded with every kind of insipid trimmings, and ceremonies alike tasteless to the eye and the ear. After him came the whole body of the clergy, consisting of the bishop from Saragoza, and a great multitude of priests and monks; of whom some really resembled Fitz-James (the famous ventriloquist, at Paris,) who, to mimick one of the fraternity, wept with one side of his face, and laughed with the other. The ladies of the city and its environs, terminated this motley procession. At times they stopped, and bawled forth some insupportably monotical and disharmonious chorusses; wherever they proceeded, every spectator uncovered

* These birds (which build in deep caverns) were sometimes our guides, when, on our excursions, we were doubtful of our way; for as in the morning they fly from these caverns, so at night they return to them.

his head, and strewed, as a kind of incense, poppy and lovage, those offensive plants, before the saint! In this order they marched round the city, and returned after the lapse of one hour. Meantime, we had taken our station in the church; where, as did all the rest, we kneeled down when the saint passed us. We had soon reason to repent of our curiosity; and I must confess, though Lichtenberg is often right, when he says, "that the body kneels when the mind rises," we could not here invert this position, and say, that the mind rose when the body kneeled. For the crossing of the bishop, the deus vobiscum, the hand-kissing of the priests, the incensing, and kneeling were repeated to the utmost disgust; and even the most ardent adorers seemed to grow weary in the faith in proportion as their knees grew sore.

At length a monk ascended the pulpit; and delivered a discourse, that lasted one hour and a quarter, of which I understood very little, and under the operation of which the most zealous kneelers and crossers fell a-sleep! Even a young peasant, with a *cow-stupid-staring mien* (as Baggesan says) who stood at my side, and bravely smote his breast, and, when he did not smite, crossed himself, felt the effects of the oratory of the monk. When this preachment was ended, again we were entertained with incensing, crossing, the blessing of the bishop, the bawling of the students, noise from the organ, and, at length, the long wished-for amen. Without the church we happened to witness a scene of a more amusing nature. All the shepherds and peasants from the surrounding country, with their women, assembled on an open place, where a national ball commenced, as soon as the solemnity had closed. In the midst of them a drummer and a bag-piper were sitting, to whose musick they danced. One, who led the dance began by walking round a large circle with continual gambols, and rattling to the measure of the musick with castanets; having finished the circle, he was joined by another, and so on till all the dancers were on their legs; now each of them took his female partner, who instead of castanets, made use of her fingers for marking the measure of the musick. There was in all this no great display of art, but their motions were very graceful, and some of the men rattled the castanets with admirable skill. The dresses were rather interesting, and the young women full as handsome, but not so spritely as those on the French side.

The next morning we returned by the same way to the *hospice;* turning, however, to the right, to go through Port de la Picade. This passage rises to the same height, but has not so much snow as Port de Venasque. The weather was so fine, the sky so serene, and the prospects so charming, that the most peevish Heraclite must here have found the world delightful. Reaching the pass, we had yet a mountain on our left, which obstructed the prospect towards the west. This we climbed: and now we looked over a pile of mountains, strangely heaped upon each other. Among them Maladetta rose the highest, the greatest, the most inaccessable; the sun shone on its magnificent ice, which reflected the rays with unspeakable splendour. But on its highest summit the snow was stronger than the sun, which was not capable of melting it, consequently not of producing an icy ocean, a phenomenon only to be met with on the lower heights of the mountains. We here stood on a ridge of the rock, which forms an admirable barrier between the two countries. It is in many parts so narrow, that, if the Heraclite were here to indulge his gloomy mood, the tears from one of his eyes would flow with the waters of the Garonne into the Atlantick ocean; while those from the other would join the Ebro, and fall into the Mediterranean. Not far from this place we saw a small stream

descending from one of the sides of Maladetta towards the frontier mountains; here it finds a hole, where, like a Proteus it slips in and appears again on the other side of the mountains, as one of the principal sources of the Garonne.

Entering the French territory we met a bear-hunter, who complained that he had found no game. We accompanied him for a while, but he finding no traces, we soon left him. Shortly after our conversation, however, he shot a very large bear. On a finely inclining slope we walked through numberless flocks and herds, by the fertile Valle d'Aran, towards our home. In four hours we reached Castelvieil, and shortly after our lodgings, were the landlord and his nine daughters waited, with true Pyrennean curiosity, for the rarities which we were expected to bring.

TO OUR READERS.

Though the voice of complaint, such is the extreme delicacy of our friends and patrons, has not, except in a solitary instance reached our ears, yet the Editor, with his accustomed frankness declares to his subscribers, that for some months past, ill health and the effects of the Embargo, have compelled him to give to the pages of The Port Folio, nothing but an interrupted and desultory attention. Shortly after that profligate and pernicious act was passed, which has baffled the enterprize, manacled the industry, and crippled the commerce of the country, the Editor, a claimant upon his subsciption list to the *bona fide* amount of Ten Thousand Dollars, found notwithstanding the partial punctuality of a few of the more opulent, that the *rills* of remittance were either choked up, or dried. The Editor is stating a fact, not making an apology. HE MAKES NO APOLOGIES, but when conscious of the commission of voluntary evil. While with alacrity he testifies his gratitude to many, Truth and Justice oblige him to insinuate to others, that if the right to complain be urged, the cause is in *part* attributable to themselves. Buxom Health, alert Spirits, and industrious Habits often succeed to that throne, which has been usurped by Sickness and Languor; but nothing will flourish even under such a reign, if the sunshine of patronage be withdrawn or obscured. Were the Editor the minion of Fortune, such is his zeal for Polite Literature, he would most lavishly disseminate a *gratis* paper; but as he has no access to the mines of Potosi, or the bank of England, it imports him, though wholly pure of the least tint of Avarice, to realize something in the shape of competency, or atleast, to have it in his power to do prompt justice to his office. For as it has been honestly and intrepidly asked on an imperishable page, by one whose life was devoted to the cause of Genius, high Principle and Truth, Who goeth a warfare, at any time, at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or SAITH NOT THE LAW THE SAME ALSO?

For The Port Folio.

LITERARY INTELLIGENCE.

Mr. Mathew Carey, bookseller of this city, has just published in a style of much neatness and correctness, that invaluable fragment of the works of Tacitus, which, as distinguished from the annals, is, with perfect propriety, denominated history. This American edi-

tion, which we hope will be studied not only by scholars and statesmen, but by schoolboys, is regulated by the superiour accuracy of the text of Brotier not without occasional reference to the readings of Gronovius and Barbou. In a very unpretending preface, the Editor modestly narrates his mode of conducting the work, and we can discern no objection either to his plan or execution. This preface, contrary to established usage, is written in the *English* language; but Mr. Carey may be defended by the example of Mr. Gibbon, who dedicated, in his vernacular idiom, an Essay in French on the study of polite literature. Moreover, as from the avocations of a busy and enterprising bookseller, Mr. Carey cannot be supposed to have much leisure for Latin composition, he probably with that high sense of honour which we know he posseses, disdained any artifice of concealment, and expressed his ideas in the language most familiar to him.

We are highly pleased with a promise from this bookseller that should this portion of the remains of TACITUS be received with complacency the residue of the works of this Historian will probably appear, in the words of Horace, *Cum Zephyris et hirundine prima.* We anticipate that the publick favour will enable Mr. Carey to fulfil his implied engagement, and we cordially wish his labours may be crowned with that success which liberal enterprise, judiciously directed, always deserves. On a former occasion when the writer of this article commended, with a warmth that he *felt*, Mr. Carey's various and valuable editions of the Sacred Scriptures, it was insinuated by the malevolence of party that the praise was ironical, and the language foreign to the heart. But that gentleman may be assured the malicious inuendo was equally false and foolish, and that whenever he dedicates his active faculties to the dissemination of High and Holy, and Polite and Classical Literature, he shall always receive from the Editor of The Port Folio a copious measure of honest approbation. Let a competent individual, of whatever political or religious creed, publish such immortal pages as the Holy Bible and the purer authours of antiquity, and he shall always find in the conductor of this paper nothing but zeal to second efforts so honourable to mankind.

MERRIMENT.

At Mr. Beckford's sale at Fonthill, a gentlman purchased a bed at a very high price, and found when it was knocked down to him, that he had bid against his most intimate acquaintance, who expressed his concern; and his friend most cordially shook him by the hand, and made an urgent inquiry after his health, which the purchaser assured him was never so well. "I am rejoiced to hear it," said the other, "because, in that case, I'm sure you'll let me have the bargain." "Nay my friend," said the purchaser, what has that to do with it." "Because," said he, "if you are quite well, you can't want to *keep your bed.*"

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